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they are so connected that the mind passes naturally from one to the other. A good example is Job 28, in which the first element, the divine world-plan, is meant until verse 28, where the sense changes abruptly to the second idea. Again man's discernment of his nature, etc., at one time appears as mere knowledge, e. g. Ecclesiastes 1:18, and at another as prudence and diligence, e. g. Proverbs 6:6; and again as virtue in contrast with vice, e. g. Proverbs 7:4, 5. At times also "Wisdom" is the means of solving the problems of life, the satisfying of man's longings, e. g. Proverbs 3:21-26 and 8:19-21. But whether the word as used has all these meanings or not, the above presentation shows the relations of the four books composing "Wisdom" literature. Thus Hebrew Wisdom is a profound though unscientific *solution of the life-problem of the individual*. It answers the questions, *How and for what end shall I live?*

This solution is not reached on the basis of the earthly life, but by the recognition of such a relation to God as implies immortality.

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## BABYLONIAN BANKING-HOUSES.\*

By THEODORE G. PINCHES,

British Museum, London.

SOON after Mr. Boscawen's publication of the results of his researches among the tablets acquired by Geo. Smith when on his last and fatal expedition to Mesopotamia, I was studying one day at the Museum here, when I found on reading through one of a number of tablets which Mr. Boscawen had given out to me, that the text was nothing else but a list of families, apparently Babylonian, with a statement as to the position of their respective dwellings. The most interesting at the time was the last of the list, for the paragraph in question referred to the "House of Egibi." This text is of the time of Assurbanipal. The paragraph was, of course, a direct proof that Egibi did not live during the period when the contract-tablets acquired by Smith were being drawn up. Mr.

\* The Editor, with permission of Mr. Pinches, herewith publishes a private letter from him, bearing the date November 2, 1888.

Boscawen had himself also referred to a text, dated in the fourth year of Esarhaddon, in which one of the contracting parties was described as a descendant of Egibi. On account of the above references, I began myself to have, very early, doubts as to the existence of the banking firm of Egibi & Co.

When I came to study the texts myself I found that the Egibi family, though constantly mentioned on the tablets, was only one of a number of old families inhabiting Babylon and its environs; and I came across such names as Misiraa ("the Egyptian"), Ittu-Marduk, Bel-eteru, Didi, Nur-Sin, etc., etc., all mentioned as remote ancestors of people engaged in trade at Babylon. The only difference was that the family or tribe of Egibi was much more numerous at Babylon than the others; and therefore, being for the greater part wealthy and ardent traders, their names occur naturally more frequently on these old trade-documents. Of course it is very likely that the members of these old families aided and protected each other, but I do not think that we can say that the members of any one family are proved to have been in partnership together—on the contrary, we know that Itti-Marduk-balatu, son of Nabu-ahi-iddin, son of Egibi, entered into partnership with Sapik-ziri, son of Nabu-sum-iddin, son of Nadin-seim (see the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, I., p. 203), a person of another tribe. Of course, members of the family of Egibi *may* have been sometimes in partnership, but the great banking firm of Egibi & Co. is at present a creation of the imagination. Oppert is said to have remarked that "had it been Fox Talbot, instead of Bosanquet the banker, who had taken up the subject and helped to publish the chronological tables, etc., Egibi & Co. would not have been bankers, but photographers!"

Without making, at the present time, the sweeping assertion that bankers did not exist in Babylonia in ancient times, I think it may be said that we have as yet found nothing to indicate that they did exist. The documents that have come down to us refer, for the greater part, to buying, selling, and lending money, goods, produce, and slaves. Whether such a note as "give so-and-so so much corn," etc., could be regarded as a cheque or not is both uncertain and unlikely. I believe I have found one isolated case in which one person draws upon another for money due to him; but whether it was a real, true, banking-account or not, is uncertain.